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Native labour in
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NATIVE LABOUR IN SOUTH AFRICA.

A REPORT OF A PUBLIC MEETING,
JOINTLY CONVENED BY THE
ABORIGINES PROTECTION SOCIETY
AND THE
BRITISH AND FOREIGN ANTI-SLAVERY SOCIETY,
WHICH WAS HELD AT
CAXTON HALL, WESTMINSTER,
On 29th April, 1903.

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NATIVE LABOUR IN SOUTH AFRICA.

A public meeting on this subject, convened by the Aborigines Protection Society and the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, was held in Caxton Hall, Westminster, on Wednesday, 29th April, 1903, the chair being occupied by the Right Hon. Sir John E. Gorst, M.P., and among those present being Lord Overtoun, Sir T. Fowell Buxton, G.C.M.G., Bart., Sir W. Brampton Gurdon, K.C.M.G., M.P., Sir Henry J. Cotton, K.C.S.I., Mr. Thomas Bayley, M.P., Mr. W. Crooks, M.P., Mr. Herbert Samuel, M.P., Mr. E. Wright Brooks, Mr. F. W. Fox, Mr. Henry Gurney, and others. Letters expressing their inability to attend and approval of the objects of the meeting had been received from the Bishop of Chichester, the Bishop of Hereford, the Bishop of Worcester, Canon Scott-Holland, the Right Hon. Sir Charles W. Dilke, Bart., M.P., the Right Hon. Leonard Courtney, Sir Mark Stewart, Bart., M.P., Sir Edward Clarke, K.C., Mr. H. J. Wilson, M.P., and others. Sir Charles Warren, who was prevented by illness from moving the first resolution wrote: "I am opposed to the introduction of forced labour among the natives of South Africa and to bringing labourers for the Rand mines from Central Africa. Such a condition of affairs may very easily approach, insensibly, to slavery. In my opinion there is only one solution of the labour difficulty in South Africa, if it is to succeed as a colony—viz., the white man must undertake manual labour. Just before the war (*i.e.*, in 1898) there were hundreds of poor whites employed on unskilled labour in making roads for Government, to keep them from starvation, while natives were doing the skilled labour. The white man will not work along with the native at the same work. It is a thorny subject that I have heard discussed for the last twenty-five years, and I feel convinced that we are at the turning of the way just now. With the Dutch increasing so rapidly year by year, and the natives increasing almost as rapidly, the only safety for the natives is to keep large native reserves or territories, like Basutoland, where they can live and work and improve according to their own powers. The mixture of the native and white man in the labour field, for some years to come, is destruction to both, morally and financially. I look upon the native question in South Africa as a far larger and more important question than the Transvaal question was. The native tribes of Africa have hitherto looked upon us (except on one occasion) as averse to slavery and injustice. The one occasion (when we were not true to our principles) was on annexing the Transvaal in 1876. We then allowed the Boers to continue their slavery over the natives. The result was immediate; all South Africa revolted, causing the

native war of 1877-8-9. If we are not careful now, we may put all the natives of Africa against us, and may get involved in native difficulties." The Rev. Dr. Henderson (Foreign Mission Committee of the United Free Church of Scotland), who recently took part in the deputation to the Foreign Office, wrote: "It is too manifest that your efforts to arouse the conscience of the nation are not unneeded. Our recent deputation on the subject to Lord Lansdowne found him very sympathetic. In some other quarters we met with rather a hostile feeling, and were told that it was absolutely necessary to get a supply of labour for the mines of the Transvaal, as the prosperity of that country depended on it. It is only too easy to see how those who so think will not scruple to use very strong pressure to obtain that cheap native labour which they regard as so necessary to enable the Transvaal to pay its obligations to this country and the gold mines to pay 'prosperous' dividends. The line between 'induced' and 'forced' labour will be very difficult to define and observe when recruiting agents are once let loose among native races, with Government authority to raise a specified number of labour recruits. It is also hard to see why Central Africa should be spoiled of the labour it so much needs for the benefit of South Africa. It is said that it is unreasonable to keep men in Central Africa who desire to better themselves by going to work elsewhere; but that is a specious rather than a solid argument, and would, if valid, condemn all those restrictions which the Government has imposed for the good of the natives. Why is Central Africa a 'Protectorate' but to protect it against slave-hunting and its attendant evils? One might else as well ask, Why restrict the liberty of the natives in spending their earnings on drink and gambling?.....I trust your endeavour to awaken the nation to a more worthy and more Christian idea of its responsibilities to these its 'children' will be successful."

THE CHAIRMAN'S ADDRESS.

SIR JOHN E. GORST, M.P., in opening the proceedings, said: "We are assembled here to-night not for the purpose of attacking either the British Government or that of the Transvaal, but to strengthen the hands of the authorities by clear enunciation of those principles on the subject of slavery which have been so long maintained by the British people, and for which they have made in the past so many sacrifices. Now, the doctrine that it is the duty of a civilised protecting State to induce the natives to be industrious is perfectly sound. It is a doctrine which it would not do to press ruthlessly too far, however, because, if applied to white people nearer home, it might give rise to some developments which would be extremely inconvenient. It is clear that when applied to native races it is the subject of two clear limitations—first, that the industry to which they are to be induced is useful

and beneficial to themselves; and, secondly, that our inducement is not to proceed too far, or so far as to develop into compulsion. But this doctrine is not a new one; it is the very doctrine which the Government of Spain endeavoured to impress upon the original Spanish colonists of the West Indian islands after the discovery by Columbus; and yet, notwithstanding the repeated benevolent efforts of the Spanish Government to secure the observance of this doctrine, the employment of natives in the gold mines of Hispanola—in the first instance by wages—degenerated into a slavery so cruel that the whole of the aboriginal population of the West Indian islands was exterminated.

"I do not think there is much danger of any result of that kind in the case of the Transvaal. It is perfectly clear that the number of natives in the Transvaal is not great enough to supply the whole demands of the labour on the gold mines. Lord Milner, in a very recent despatch, says that the clamour for the adoption of measures to compel the black men to work resolves itself into the advocacy of higher taxation on the native population, and then he goes on to say, 'I greatly doubt whether the total abolition of the tax would cause any serious diminution in the labour supply, while I do not believe that if it were doubled the great problem of the sufficient labour supply would be far advanced to its solution.' It is estimated by the Native Department of the Transvaal that there are in that colony 80,000 male native inhabitants strong enough and fit to labour; but then upon these natives there is a very great demand besides that of the gold mines. First of all, the reports of the Native Commissioners in various parts of the Transvaal show that a large number are employed in cultivating their land. This is a very beneficial form of industry—very useful to themselves. Besides that, there are a large number required for work on the farms of the Dutch and English farmers. There are a great many, also, in the service of Europeans in other capacities besides that of farm labourers. In addition to this, there are at the present time special and extraordinary demands upon the labour of the Transvaal. First of all, there is the army of occupation and the colonial police, which will absorb a great deal of labour for some years to come. Then the damage which was done by the war has to be restored, houses have to be rebuilt, railways have to be repaired, bridges have to be reconstructed, roads and telegraphs to be supplied. Besides that, there is the resettlement of the people who have been in the concentration camps, and the repatriation of the prisoners of war. The work connected with these operations will require a great deal of labour, and will give much employment to the Transvaal natives. Then there are public works which are to the advantage of the general population of the Transvaal, and there are various new industries—and even the prospecting of new mines—which will absorb, for some time to come, a great deal of the labour available.

The Chief Commissioner for Native Affairs in the Transvaal reports that there are as many—if not more—native labourers working within the Transvaal to-day, though not in the mines, than there were before the war; so that there is no ground for saying that the Transvaal natives are idle, and that they are not working as hard as they were working before the war; only they are working, not at the gold mines, but at other industries which have a prior and a more urgent claim upon them. I think, therefore, you will agree with me that there is not—particularly after the remarks of Lord Milner which I have read to you—a great and immediate danger to the natives of the Transvaal of being forced to labour in the mines.

“What I regard as the most urgent danger is that which threatens those natives who may be brought into the Transvaal from other parts of Africa. The shifting of coloured people from one portion of the world to another is one of the chief causes which lead to the development of slavery. Shocking as was the treatment of the aboriginal inhabitants of the West Indian islands by the Spanish colonists, it was nothing compared to the horrors which took place when natives were brought in from other parts of the newly-discovered territories, and when finally Negro slaves were imported from the coast of Africa. It was this importation of foreign labour which gave rise to that frightful development of Negro slavery to put an end to which the British Government, one hundred years ago, spent a vast sum of money, and which cost our kindred in the United States of America, about forty years ago, a civil war, and a vast expenditure of blood and treasure. It is proposed by the mine owners of the Transvaal to recruit the labour they require partly from foreign territory and partly from parts of Africa which are under the protection of our own Government, and for which we have made ourselves responsible. Questions have been raised as to the treatment of natives brought in from Portuguese territory; but we can only deal with those by regulations for the protection of natives from outside territory as soon as they come within our jurisdiction. Laws of this kind were made by the colony of Queensland when natives from the Polynesian islands were brought over for the cultivation of sugar. But in our own protectorates—I refer particularly to Nyasaland and Uganda—our obligations are much greater. In these protectorates we are bound to consider, first, the development of the country itself, and, secondly, the interest of its inhabitants both white and black. There is no analogy between the proposed recruiting of natives in the tropical parts of Africa and what has been going on for years in relation to the coolie emigrants from India. The coolie emigration from India takes its rise from the interests of India and the interests of the coolies themselves. The alleged ground for this emigration is that the pressure of the population upon the land in the Ganges valley is so great that it is impossible for the

natives who are there crowded together to find proper subsistence; it is thus for the interest of the country and the natives themselves that some of them should go and seek employment elsewhere, either in the tea gardens of Assam or in the sugar plantations of Mauritius and in parts of East Africa.

“But here, in these Central Africa territories, there is, so far as we know, no pressure of population upon the land. On the contrary, the land is not producing the wealth which it might produce, for lack of labour. There is, I believe, in Nyasaland and elsewhere, opportunity for the natives of those regions to employ themselves in agricultural industry—to grow cotton, coffee, sugar, and other tropical productions which can be grown within their own territory. They have no need to go afield to seek subsistence. Then, besides agricultural industry, there are large public works which are being developed by British capital in these regions—railways and harbours, roads, telegraphs, and other works of a commercial character, which it is for the interest of the country itself to develop. It is ruinous in such circumstances for a country rashly to divest itself of its native labour. Nothing shows this more clearly than what has been done by the colony of Natal. The majority of the white population of Natal, as you know, is British. They have a free Government, which naturally looks after the interests of its own inhabitants, I hope both black and white. There is no reason to suppose that they are not perfectly alive in Natal to their own interests. This colony has passed a law forbidding the recruiting of Natal natives by agents from the Transvaal or anywhere else. Our own British Governments in Nyasaland and Uganda ought to consider the example of Natal, and until it is proved that there is some advantage to Nyasaland or to Uganda in getting rid of the native labour they ought to prohibit, as Natal has done, the recruiting of native labour.

“I may ask, in conclusion, if you take a large and world-wide view of this matter, not considering the interests of the Transvaal or of Nyasaland or of Natal, but of all the world at large, what is most advantageous? Why, the gold in the Transvaal, if it is not extracted this year, will remain there; if we were to suspend all operations in working the gold for twenty years, the gold would remain there. It would not be wasted; it would be available for another generation. But if you deprive the land of its labour, so that it lies waste instead of producing cotton, coffee, sugar, and other products which add to the enjoyment of mankind, that loss is a loss for ever. The present generation is poorer by the lack of the wealth which might be raised by labour, and the next generation cannot retrieve the loss. Therefore I consider that humanity towards the natives, opposition to what in the history of the world has always led to slavery, the example of the English colonists of Natal, the interests of the Central African protectorates and of the world at large, demand that our Government should take very seriously into

consideration the propriety of prohibiting any recruiting of labour from these central districts of Africa which are not over-populated, and where the population can be employed to such great advantage in industry."

THE LOCAL LABOUR SUPPLY.

SIR T. HOWELL BUXTON, Bart., G.C.M.G., moved the following resolution: 'That this meeting, in view of the demand which has been made for the application of pressure to compel natives to work in the Transvaal mines, appeals to His Majesty's Government to prevent resort to any form of compulsion, by excessive taxation or otherwise, and to ensure for the natives of British South Africa freedom in disposing of their labour, and the immunity from any approach to slavery to which they are entitled as subjects of the British Crown.' After pointing out that the meeting was jointly called by two societies which had always shown readiness to act together in their common work, he said, "It has been usual for the Aborigines Protection Society to take the lead in matters relating to the natives of South Africa, and, like it, the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, which I represent, wishes, for the sake of the great cause it has at heart, to be entirely independent of party politics. I am sure that all in this room desire the prosperity of all the industries of South Africa, and wish well alike to the farming and the mining classes. In Western Australia and America I have seen the prosperity of the mines, and I know that large populations can live happily in proximity to these mines. I hope that this is going to be the case in South Africa, and that the prosperity of those dependent on the Transvaal mines will be shared by others, both blacks and whites. In considering this matter we have to look not merely at what the Government has done or proposes to do, but also at what the mine-owning classes appear to demand. They may not demand as much as has been attributed to them, but, at all events, there has been the appearance of a demand for compulsion in some form or another, by which natives who would not otherwise work in the mines shall be forced to do so. I feel sure that we are all of one mind in opposing that. It is right that black people, as well as whites, should pay taxes. Taxes, like rain, fall upon the just and the unjust, on blacks and whites, and there is no objection to reasonable taxation; but when more than reasonable taxation is resorted to in order to compel men to work in the mines, then I hope that not only we in this room, the supporters of our two societies, but the country at large, will remember its ancient principles, and protest against such oppression. It would be grievously unjust, for instance, to oblige men who have already worked for years in the mines, and returned to their homes, to go back to their toil, in common with any idlers who may be hanging about. Then, again, there are native farmers, notably in Bechuanaland and Basutoland, who have laboured hard in producing good crops, of the sort found on the

ordinary Boer farms. Not in the present day alone, but in the days of Livingstone, fifty years ago, and more recently in the days of John Mackenzie, there were raids into such countries as Bechuanaland, and the tools brought from the kraals were of the same kind as those used in Boer villages. It would be a monstrous injustice if any arrangements were adopted by which natives were compelled to leave their prosperous farms and to follow other occupations. But we are running a great risk of that. We know from long experience that there is a class of natives whom the British farmers, perhaps, as well as the Dutch farmers, cordially dislike. They do not like to have black men, as independent farmers, for neighbours and competitors. There is another class they hate still more—the native teachers or ministers who may be helping to raise their fellow subjects. These are some of the people who are in danger of suffering grievously.

"We are told that the natives of South Africa are all hopelessly idle, and ought therefore to be compelled to work. Most of the natives who come under the eye of travellers are those engaged in tending flocks or herds, and it is possible that a shepherd in charge of a flock is not visibly busy; but the man who looks after his flock is as much on the alert as the man who is hammering at an anvil. Again, we are told that all the married women are slaves, that every Kafir in a kraal is idling about while his wives are working for him. I hope we shall lay it down as a rule that it is not the business of the Government to interfere with the marriage arrangements of any community over which we have control. Even missionary societies have not been unanimous as to the best method of dealing with polygamy, and this is no business of the Government's. The more we look into this matter, the more we see that the marriages of Kafirs are in accordance with regulations which they understand and which are to the advantage of both sexes, that, if the women do their share of the work of the family, the men also do theirs, and that the Kafir woman is no more of a slave than is the British housewife.

"It is quite clear that mining work has come to be very distasteful to many of those who are put to it, and those who are interested in mines should ask themselves whether they are wise in their methods. There was a time when there was great mortality among those employed in some of the mines, and, though the arrangements have been improved, the rumour of that state of things has reached every kraal. It is not enough for the arrangements to be improved; the fact that improvements have been made must be known. It is, I believe, certain that had there been better treatment of the Kafirs in the mines there would now be much less reluctance to be employed in them. Again, we are told that unless cheap labour is forthcoming some of the low-grade mines will go out of work. There is nothing new in that. In every mining district there have been unsuccessful ventures; one man strikes a good

lode, another does not. In the Rocky Mountains you can find any number of abandoned mines. In Western Australia, also, you will see—near to prosperous mines that are doing splendidly, and have every prospect of continuing to do so—plenty of rusting, miserable-looking iron framework which tells of failure. Why on earth should the power and force of the Empire be employed in securing for certain people in South Africa advantage over others in Australia and elsewhere? The owners of mines in Australia will have good ground of complaint if special benefits are provided for the mines in South Africa. They have to use white labour, and pay for it. Their mines are becoming the centres of valuable Anglo-Saxon communities. Why should the Government go out of its way to put the mine-owners of South Africa in a better position? I feel sure that if this is done a very considerable feeling will be raised on that score which we have not heard of at present."

LORD OVERTOUN, in asking to second the resolution, said, "I do so as chairman of the Scottish Livingstonia Mission in Central Africa, which, along with one or two others, has been seeking to bring the influences of Christianity and civilisation to bear on the people of those regions. Our Mission is named after that great Scotchman whose earnest desire was to rescue Central Africa from slavery, and it has been labouring on the west coast of Lake Nyasa for now twenty-six years. We have not only been able to found native churches; we have also instructed the people in various trades, such as engineering, carpentering, printing, house-building, quarrying, agriculture, and telegraphy. Therefore you can well understand that we regard with consternation the movement that has now been initiated by the Government to deport these natives to the gold mines of the Transvaal. The beginning of the movement, according to the Government's statement, was that a large number of people were starving in some parts of Nyasaland, and that it was necessary to send them southward to the Transvaal in order that they might find occupation. All I can say is that in the industrial district on the west of Lake Nyasa, which extends over four hundred miles, we have never yet heard of that famine, and that there is occupation for every labourer in it who wishes to work. We are, in fact, wanting more labourers in order to do the building of our mission stations and to carry out the improvements in mechanical arrangements which we are introducing, and we are now paying much more for labour than we did two years ago, because there are too few men for the demand. We are quite aware that, if high wages are paid south of the Zambesi, there will always be a greater or less number of men anxious to go there, and we cannot interfere, nor do we wish to interfere, with the ordinary laws of demand and supply. We feel, however, that it is right, if the natives do go south of the Zambesi of their own accord to find labour, that they should get the utmost protection which the Government is able to give them, and we object

to the way in which labour is recruited under Government authority for the gold mines. We are told that the men are to go voluntarily and work; but there is no doubt whatever that pressure will be put on them. The men, of course, know little of the ills in store for them. Those who have already gone down to the mines either never came back at all, or came back utterly demoralised. The character and temperament of those who are just emerging from heathenism, ignorance, and superstition, are very susceptible to many of the temptations and many of the sad influences of what we sometimes mistakenly call civilisation. You cannot wonder that we view with the deepest alarm the movement that is now being initiated by the Government. The Chairman spoke of the settlers in Natal passing a law that natives are not to leave the colony of Natal to labour elsewhere. A law to the very same effect was passed in 1898, forbidding natives in Nyasaland to leave the Protectorate except under the most stringent conditions, and after receiving permission from the authorities of the district. Why this provision should be now relaxed at the demand of the Transvaal gold mines it is hard to tell, and we do not think that it is either fair or right. Whatever may be said of the recruiting, as it is called, of men in the district of Nyasaland, we feel, as I have stated to the authorities, that there will be and there must be a good deal of the press-gang in the whole matter. You remember the words of our poet:—

Ill fares the land to hastening ills a prey,
Where wealth accumulates and men decay.

"The object of the gold mines, doubtless right enough in itself, is to accumulate wealth, but we utterly object to forcing men to labour in them. The natives of the Protectorate will be destroyed while companies seek to pile up gold by the labour of those men. In laying down the conditions under which they are to serve in the Transvaal the Government has attempted something for their protection, and we are thankful for that; but we would much rather that they were not enticed away at all. We feel that we need the whole population of the land in order to carry out the development of their own country. The authorities, of course, say that, having authorised the recruiting of labour, they cannot go back, but that it is purely an experimental attempt, which they have limited to 1,000 men, and they ask us, who object to the scheme, to watch very carefully its working, and to report any cases of disaster in the carrying out of it, so that they may be able to judge whether it is desirable to continue it. But we fear that a movement of this kind, once initiated, will be very hard to stop. We have urged the Government to retrace its steps, but in vain, and so I am here to protest against the policy that has been entered upon."

MR. W. CROOKS, M.P., in supporting the resolution, said that efforts were now being made to construe slavery into something else, or to find a new name for slavery. He agreed with Lord Overtoun that the cultivation of

land was of vastly greater importance to us as a civilized nation than the unearthing of any number of diamonds. No one's moral character or worth was improved by his wearing diamonds, or having more gold than he could make proper use of; and immense injury was done by dishonest efforts to acquire them. The mine-owners were at this moment asking us to barter away the liberties of a liberty-loving nation, and to revive slavery, by which men and women who worked for their daily bread in this country would suffer, as well as the natives of South Africa. Let us remember the warning of Russell Lowell, the world's poet:—

Working men and working women,
It's plain as one and one make two,
That those who make black slaves of niggers
Soon will make white slaves of you.

Our grandfathers, who put down the slave trade, would not have stood for five minutes the forced labour that was now being resorted to, not to create food for the people or in any way benefit them, but to create wealth for men who already had far too much.

IMMIGRANT LABOUR.

SIR HENRY J. COTTON moved the second resolution: "That this meeting also appeals to His Majesty's Government to prevent the natives of those parts of Central Africa which are under British protection from being induced to migrate to South Africa for work in the mines under conditions that will deprive the places from which they are taken of the advantages of their labour, and prove physically and morally disastrous to themselves." "The request that I should do so," he said, "has been made to me, I presume, on the ground that I have had very considerable experience in the system of emigration from one part of a large continent to another. My experience has been in India, under conditions not altogether dissimilar to those which now exist in South Africa. The great tea industry in India is centred in the province of Assam, over which it was my privilege to preside for a period of about six years. During the past forty-five years there has been a steady stream of emigration from India to Assam. The total immigrant labour population in Assam now amounts to not less than 600,000, and they have been imported from parts of India on an average involving a journey of 1,000 miles. You will see that immigration has been going on on a very large scale. The Government has passed many laws and regulations, and many rules have been framed, to regulate the traffic and to remove the many evils which surround it, but I can assure you that the amount of fraud and deception and suffering and misery which have been inflicted on these people and their families during the past half century almost exceeds description. In the first place there is the question of fraud and deception. Armies of recruiters are employed by people who are under contract with the planters

for the supply of labour. These recruiters indulge in the most deplorable practices: the records of the Criminal Courts are full of their misdeeds. If you want to know the real truth, appeal to the missionaries of the country, both Catholic and Protestant. Then consider the mortality which accompanies this emigration. I have known years in which the mortality has amounted to as much as forty-nine per thousand on the population transported, and that merely within the few days which the journey has taken. I have known in one month no less than eighty miserable immigrants taken out dead and dying from the railway train alone. The journey was once described, not by me, but by a very able administrator in India, as 'rivaling the horrors of the Middle Passage,' and I believe that description is true. Of course, we have improved now very much on the state of things to which I have alluded. The journey is now a comparatively quick one, and the sufferings and mortality among the emigrants have been much reduced. As regards the condition of the labourers employed on the tea gardens, which, in the majority of cases, are managed by kindly honest English gentlemen, I say no more than that they are generally well treated and well looked after; but there is, unfortunately, a large residuum of bad gardens, where the lot of the coolies is a most unhappy one, and occasionally most scandalous cases are brought to notice.

"I now turn to Africa and the injury done to the immigrant. We have all heard that certain regulations have been passed for his protection. These have just been published in a Parliamentary White Book, which I hold in my hand. I have examined it with some interest, being very familiar with the similar rules and regulations that are laid down for the protection of labour emigration in India, and I regret to say that I have formed a very unfavourable impression of the South African regulations, of which so much has been said. They cannot compare, either in the care with which they have been prepared or in the details to which they relate, with the similar regulations in force in India. Among other provisions, there is one—a very proper one, so far as it goes—which provides that each native, on volunteering, shall be brought before a judicial officer, who will satisfy himself that the said native is thoroughly aware of the term of contract and nature of his service. Well, that is a very necessary provision. We have a similar provision in India, and in India, at least, it may be said that intending emigrants have for the most part had opportunities of associating with people of their own country who have already been employed in tea-gardens, and who have returned and told them of the state of things. But in South Africa that is not the case, and recruits are being collected together for the first time from a part of the country which has not hitherto been accustomed to furnish emigrants. They are wholly ignorant of the character of the labour and the ways of life, of the climate and conditions of the country, to which

they are going. They are not in a position to acquaint themselves—and do you suppose for a moment, any of you, that the judicial officer in Nyasaland is in a position to inform these savages or semi-savages who have been recruited and brought before him?—of the character of the labour to which they will be subjected and the climate. I dare say few of us have any clear idea of the character of the work to which the Kafir is subjected in the mines. It would be difficult for us to explain it to one another, and certainly it will be impossible to explain it to these men. They know nothing of the work, nothing of the strange country to which they are going, nothing of the completely different climate and associations to which they are being taken.

"It is evident that the Secretary for the Colonies, Mr. Chamberlain, entertained some suspicions on this head, for I observe that in his speech in the House of Commons on 24th March he said, in a spirit of apologetic explanation, 'Cannot the conditions be put before them by the missionaries?' evidently holding the judicial officer in considerable mistrust. Well, there is something in that; but I ask you, if this is done, to imagine the friction which is likely to arise between these missionaries and the Government of the country. Reflect also on the condition of affairs when the head of the department concerned is obliged to say that it depends on the missionaries to explain to these unfortunate men where they are going and what they are going to do! Then Mr. Chamberlain went on to say in that speech, 'Unless the native, after considering the whole circumstances'—as if these men were in a position to consider the whole circumstances!—'is convinced that it is to his advantage to go, he will not go; and if he goes to the mines and dislikes the work he can find employment on other occupations.' Now, sir, that is exactly what he cannot do! He goes on a year's penal contract, and if, when he gets to the mines, he finds that it is extremely unpleasant work, and that he dislikes his conditions excessively, he is helpless—he can do nothing. If the 'native,' as he is called, deserts, it is true that he is not liable to be flogged, as he was under the old ordinances—that provision has been abrogated under Mr. Chamberlain's orders; but all the remainder of the penal section remains, and he is liable to a fine of 10*l*. Well, that is a very stiff fine, and if he cannot pay that he is liable to be sent to imprisonment for a period of three months; and after he has served his time or paid his fine—where he has 'satisfied the law,' that is the expression used—when he has satisfied the law, he is returned to the tender mercies of the employer from whom he has run away. Well, I think that is monstrous! And what a commentary all this affords on Mr. Chamberlain's remark that 'if he goes to the mines and dislikes the work he can find employment elsewhere'! Even if he could find such employment, even if there were a demand for his labour elsewhere, of which he would be able to avail himself as a free man,

just conceive the position of this unfortunate native of Nyasaland, who does not know a single man in the country who can speak his own language, and who cannot speak a word of the language used by anybody in South Africa. What is such a man to do?

"Now I turn to the physical and moral injury done to the immigrant. I have seen in Assam the physical effect on immigrants. It is very bad indeed. For a series of years—for forty years—the deaths among adults employed under penal contract on tea gardens have averaged about 50 per 1,000. That is a terrible mortality. I daresay you are as well aware as I am that amongst ourselves in England the mortality of adults in the prime of life is 8 or 9 per 1,000. This terrible mortality among immigrant labourers is due to their change to another climate, to their hard work, and to their living under conditions to which they are not accustomed. They die mostly in the first year of their new experience. Johannesburg is some 6,000 feet above the level of the sea, and during the winter there it is very cold. The natives of Africa who come from tropical climates will suffer at least as much there from disease as their brethren have done in India. Then there is the question of demoralisation which has been dwelt on by Lord Overtoun, and I have no shadow of a doubt that his observations are true.

"So much for the immigrant. Now think of the effect on those he leaves behind. The family are to be supported during his absence by an allowance of 4*s*. a month; that is the amount they are to be paid during his absence. I presume that this man had been engaged on some useful work—on cultivation probably, and not only helping to maintain himself and his family, but serving the community at large. Now, his wife and children, left without any support, will be subjected to all the risks and temptations which prevail among a primitive people. And suppose this 'native' dies—as a considerable number of them are certain to do; what arrangement is made for his wife and family? I quite see that one of the worst features in emigration from different parts of Africa is this separation from the family. Again I quote Mr. Chamberlain. He said in the same speech, 'I am, of course, in favour of giving the Kafir, who is removed from Central Africa or other parts of Africa to South Africa, precisely the same protection as is given to the coolie who leaves India for the West Indies.' There is a certain emigration from India to the Fiji Islands, to the West Indies, and elsewhere, and Mr. Chamberlain says he wishes to give the same protection to the African emigrant as is now given to the Hindoo who goes to the West Indies. Well, that is exactly what is not done. In India we have a Government Official Agency in charge of emigration to the West Indies, and Mr. Chamberlain must have been well aware of it, because this agency consists of Government agents employed by and under the Colonial Office, and it is these men who recruit labour in India, and convey it to the West Indies. There

is no such Government agency established anywhere in Africa, and although Mr. Chamberlain is in favour of giving the African the same protection as the Indian, yet, in the initial stage, at all events, he has done nothing to ensure the same protection. I saw in the papers the other day that £150,000 had been subscribed for the purpose of sending recruiters through different parts of Africa, £50,000 of which had been subscribed by a gentleman whose name is known to most of you—Mr. J. B. Robinson, of Park Lane. This recruitment is entirely a private enterprise; there is no official organisation, and it makes all the difference in the world in such matters, whether the protection is afforded in the first instance officially, or whether you allow recruiters broadcast who can only get the labour they want by fraud and deception. Then Mr. Chamberlain went on to say: 'When the deputation represented the other day to Lord Lansdowne that the migration of natives was open to great objection, in that it led to the severance of a man from his family, and that there was a chance of his deteriorating amongst the populations of the towns, and so on, we say'—that is, the Government says—'that every one of these objections attaches equally to the coolie from India.' Now, not one of these objections applies to the coolie from India. One of the most important rules laid down with regard to West Indian immigration from India is that there shall be a fixed proportion of male and female immigrants; in other words, that not less than 40 per cent. of females must go in every ship. This is done in order that they may take their wives and families with them, and as a matter of fact the proportion always exceeds 40 per cent. I do not know whether it is as low as that in any year. Mr. Chamberlain, therefore, has been led into a serious misstatement of fact. Then he talks of deterioration, and says this applies equally to the Indian coolie. I reply that the African coolie who is brought to Johannesburg is thrown into a demoralising atmosphere in the town, but that the Indian coolie who goes to Jamaica is not thrust into the mines or made to work like the African native. He is sent to labour on similar work to that upon which he is engaged in his own country, not in towns; he is engaged on sugar cultivation, or in gardening of some kind. The demoralising influence is a very different thing when men are consigned to a large mining town like Johannesburg from what it is when they are sent into a comparatively healthy atmosphere of country life as they are in Jamaica or any of the West Indian islands.

"I will refer once more to these rules and regulations. They do not allow sufficiently for the inspection of labourers employed in the mines, for their inspection by a competent Government agency. Now, unless that is done, the most terrible results will ensue. There is, of course, to be some sort of inspection; but the powers defined in these rules which are given to inspectors are not to be compared with the powers which are given to

our inspectors of labour in Assam. We insist in Assam on proper housing accommodation being provided for the labourers; that is a most important regulation. There is ample evidence to show that in Johannesburg house accommodation is woefully inadequate. Then we insist upon a proper water supply being provided. There is nothing about that in these rules. We insist that where there is a considerable number of labourers employed, proper medical attendance shall be provided. There is nothing of that in these rules. In all respects I find the rules most insufficient and inadequate. Then we do not get that amount of information which we ought to get from South Africa and the mines as to the actual working of them. There ought to be the fullest information available on this subject, and annual reports should be submitted both on recruitment and on labour working in the mines; but these rules do not give authority to the inspectors to obtain the information which they need to prepare such reports, which are of the utmost importance. From them alone can we be in a position to learn of the conditions under which labour is employed, what the mortality is, what the desertion amounts to, and all other information connected with the welfare and treatment of the labourers on the mines. I doubt whether we shall ever come to a satisfactory conclusion in regard to labour in South Africa until the matter has been thoroughly threshed out by a Royal Commission. This was Mr. Chamberlain's own suggestion, though he has taken no steps to give effect to it. What we want to get is a commission consisting of independent persons, including, of course, experts in Africa, who shall be in a position to inquire into the matter fully, and lay down complete rules for the guidance of the Administration, which has had no previous experience in these matters."

Mr. HERBERT SAMUEL, M.P., in seconding the resolution, said: "The objections to drawing labourers from the more northerly parts of Central Africa to take them to the Transvaal are threefold. There are moral objections, there are economic objections, and there are physical objections. With regard to the moral objections so much has already been said that I need hardly touch upon them, except to say that when I had the pleasure of being present at the deputation to Lord Lansdowne the other day I was not a little impressed—and no one could fail to be impressed—by the emphasis laid by the missionaries who had themselves worked in British Central Africa on the evil likely to be wrought by drawing the natives from that territory into the Transvaal, by taking them from their simple vocations and more or less primitive ways of life and placing them amidst the temptations of a great and not a highly moral town. These evils, they said, would inevitably work infinite harm to the people who were affected by them, and the results—one missionary said, quoting another who had worked in Central Africa—would be worse than polygamy itself.

"Then as to the economic objections. No doubt the absence of 1,000 able-bodied men would not make a very material difference to the prosperity of the British Central Africa Protectorate; but this is, of course, only intended as an experiment, and if it succeeds—that is to say, if many of the thousand do not die—then we shall have all the British Protectorates in Central and East Africa thrown open to recruiting, and before very long 100,000 may be drawn for service of the Transvaal. And even 100,000 would not suffice to supply the demand which is likely, within the next few years, to show itself in that country. Well, it is absurd that we should deplete our other Protectorates for the advantage of this one colony; and, seeing that we have just spent £6,000,000 on building the Uganda Railway, it would be the height of folly to withdraw the most intelligent, the most enterprising, and the most sturdy labourers—for it is they who would be drawn away, the very men on whose work we rely to feed that railway with trade—with the inevitable result that the British taxpayer will have to postpone for a very long time any hope of recoupment of the money that he has spent. I am myself acquainted with the territory of Uganda, which I visited last year. Uganda is a very thinly populated country; the population is quite inadequate for the development of that country which we hope will come in the near future, and to take men away from there and give them to the Transvaal is, from an economic point of view, the height of folly.

"But an even graver objection than the economic is the physical objection, the objection on the score of climate. The people of Uganda, although they are of good muscular development, are of delicate constitution, they cannot live outside of their own climate. Sir Henry Stanley told me the other day, and I am at liberty to repeat his opinion, that he found that wherever he had attempted to take natives from Uganda as bearers, even a short distance from their country, they had succumbed in considerable numbers, no matter how well fed and well treated they might be; and Bishop Tucker recently wrote to the *Times*, that in one expedition no fewer than 2,000 natives of Uganda had died simply from the change of diet and the change of climate. With regard to climate, Uganda is on the Equator, Johannesburg is 26 degrees south of the Equator. Uganda lies about 4,000 feet above the sea, and Johannesburg is 5,500 above the sea. We are always accustomed to think of Africa as one place, just as we think of India very often as one place; but to take natives from Uganda to put them to work at Johannesburg, would be just the same in point of distance as taking people from Algeria, or Morocco, and setting them to work in Scotland; and not merely on the plains of Scotland, but setting them to work on the hill-tops of Scotland. So that it is obvious that a very large number of these people would inevitably perish if they were sent to this climate which is so utterly unsuitable to them.

"Now why is this proposal made? It is made simply because there are a certain number of Englishmen, and others who are not Englishmen, who are anxious to make fortunes in a hurry. The Chairman spoke about the Spaniards in the West Indies and in South America, and as he was speaking it recalled to my mind a passage in Prescott's 'History of the Expedition of Cortes' in which he describes how the Spaniards, when they were asked by the natives to explain their reason for coming there, answered that they (the Spaniards) suffered from a disease of the heart, for which gold was a sovereign remedy. I am afraid that the circumstances are rather the opposite, and that it is rather gold which produces in many people a disease of the heart—a heartlessness which leads them to make proposals such as those we have heard.

"What is the solution of this labour question? Do not let our remarks be merely negative; let us endeavour also to be constructive if we can. I do not think that many people in this country realise the difficulties that stood in the way of natives who were willing to go to work in the mines—the number of obstacles that stood in their way. There were, in the first place, the enormous distances. Many of them went 500 to 1,600 miles to get work; frequently they had to travel a large part of the distance without the aid of railways, and with no accommodation on the road to assist them on their journey, with the result that they frequently arrived at the mines in a half-starved condition. There their food was often unsuitable; they suffered from cold in the winter, they suffered from insanitary conditions in the compounds, with the consequence that the death-rate was frequently seriously high. In one district of Rhodesia, the Selukwe district, in the two years ending March, 1900, the death-rate was 75 per 1,000 of the men who worked in those mines. They were exposed to temptations, through drink, which they were unable to resist; they could not make themselves understood owing to differences in language; they were compelled to mix with races with whom they had been for generations in hostility; they frequently found that the promises made to them by the recruiting touts were not fulfilled; they were often subject to violent treatment in order to make them produce the utmost amount of work; and on their way home they were frequently robbed of their savings. Under these circumstances it is a miracle, not that so few labourers went to the mines, but that so many tens of thousands were still able to go and willing to go. It shows that the natives, so far from being idlers and loafers, must be really desirous of earning money by honest labour, or they would not have put up with the many difficulties that stood in their way. At the present time these difficulties are being largely removed. Sir Godfrey Lagden, the Chief Commissioner of Native Affairs in the Transvaal, has been doing his utmost to get rid of them. Railways are opening up the country more and more. That is the solution of the South

African labour question—that and the raising of the wages to a proper level; and in so far as natives can still not be obtained, then we should endeavour to make it more possible to employ white labour by lowering the cost of living and extending the use of machinery. In Johannesburg the cost of living is artificially kept up by the trusts and the rings, and white labour is needlessly expensive in consequence.

“I will not detain you longer, except to quote to you the report, published two days ago, of the Commissioner of Mines in Johannesburg. He says: ‘The present exceptional scarcity of labour is undoubtedly due to causes of a temporary nature, and to experiments in the reduction of wages, which, in face of an increasing demand, have now been recognized as somewhat injudicious.’ And he goes on to say, ‘The scarcity of native labour has had the effect of increasing the rush of white employees, of causing engineers to pay greater attention to the introduction of labour-saving appliances, and of increasing the value of the natives’ work..... Before the war the average for six years previous to 1899 was 13·2 white men per 100 natives employed. In June, 1902, it was 20·2 white men to every 100 natives, and in December, 1902, it was 25·3 white men to every 100 natives.’ So you see that, so far from it being impossible to employ a larger number of white men, that is precisely the solution which the mine-owners are now successfully endeavouring to reach. In such circumstances surely it is futile to urge, it is unnecessary to suggest that drastic, pernicious measures should be used to increase the labour supply, when the question is solving itself by improved facilities for reaching the mines, by better treatment of the natives there, by reducing the cost of living, by labour-saving appliances, and by extending the number of white men employed. It is by such means that we can promote the prosperity of the Transvaal, without inducing large bodies of men to leave the homes to which they are attached, to go to places where they are exposed to evils they cannot resist, in climate where large numbers of them will inevitably perish.”

MR. E. WRIGHT BROOKS, who supported the resolution, said: “That we should have been called upon at the present day to introduce under another name a system of slavery—for it amounts to that—in the centre of Africa, is a thing that some years ago we should have thought to be an impossibility; but what has brought it about? Why, the rush for extracting the gold from the mines in the Transvaal in which a large number of people are interested. Now what is about to take place in the Central African provinces? What is called the recruitment of labourers is to begin, I believe, with 1,000. If these men are merely to be received as volunteers for labour in the mines I am inclined to think the recruitment will not go very far, but if, on the other hand, they are to be beguiled and forced by the authorities to go from their native land into a strange land to conditions of labour of which

they have no knowledge, and which will be often exceedingly severe and deleterious to them, then surely it is our duty to protest against any arrangements that can lead to that sad state of things. A few days ago there came over the wire from Johannesburg the real reason for this forced recruitment of labour from Central Africa. Mr. George Albre, the President of the General Mining and Finance Corporation stated at their General Meeting, which was held a few days ago, that their concerns were in a very prosperous condition, that the realised profits for the year amounted to £422,000, and the share assets had been increased by £611,000. After paying dividends of 20 per cent, the share investments and cash and claim holdings at current prices exceeded the capital and liabilities by over £2,000,000 sterling. Portions of the profits had been applied to writing down the book value of the share investments and increasing the reserve. He stated that, against his personal inclinations, he had arrived at the conclusion that it was absolutely essential to import labour, as it was unnatural for a country teeming with such great possibilities to remain starved for any length of time because the inhabitants were selfish enough to resist the Government. Well, a more barefaced statement of an attempted fraud upon a poor ignorant people never, I should think, was put before the world. I consider it a shame that any one under British Government should be allowed, after making such a statement as that, to advocate the introduction of labour—to be paid for at what rate? At the miserable rate of less than 1s. a day, under conditions obliging them to eat food they are not accustomed to, and to go down 3,000 or 4,000 feet into the bowels of the earth, there to procure the gold which would be better left where it is if these are the only conditions upon which it can be brought to the surface.”

THE CHAIRMAN: “A gentleman in the audience has sent up his name, and desires to amend the resolution by also condemning emigration of labour from the West Indies. I do not think I can shut out the amendment if the gentleman wishes to move it; but I hope that, considering the late hour of the evening, he will be as short as he can.”

MR. QUINLAN, a native of Jamaica: “The amendment which I propose is that you should insert the words ‘and from Jamaica and other British West Indian Islands’ after ‘Central Africa.’ I do so because Lord Harris, at a meeting of the South African Gold Trust, said there was no objection to the importation of labour from the West Indies; and because a few days later the *Times* suggested that if agents from South Africa went to the West Indies for labour, they would probably succeed in inducing thousands of ‘niggers’ to proceed thither. Have we not trouble enough in the West Indies? Don’t you import coolies from India to supply the planters there? I am myself a West Indian Negro, and there are many of us who are anxious for the advancement of our race. We feel grateful for the Act of Emancipation

which took twenty years of hard labour before the people of this country could be got to see that we were men and brothers; and now, after sixty years, we find that slavery is about to be reintroduced under the British flag. In the West Indies we consider we should be utterly put back in our great movement if people were induced to leave that country and to go to the mines of South Africa."

MR. THOMAS, a native of the United States, briefly seconded the amendment, which, on being put to the meeting, was carried.

SIR BRAMPTON GURDON, M.P.: "Before we close the meeting I must ask you to give a very hearty vote of thanks to Sir John Gorst. I was thankful when we secured his services, because I had heard only a few days ago a most excellent speech from him in the House on this very subject, and I know the sincere and earnest sympathy which he has with the movement. I feel that that sympathy is made more valuable by the fact that he has himself had experience in the colonies; and I feel very deeply on the subject myself, because I have had experience, not only in British South Africa as a civil servant, but also as a missionary in British Central Africa. I have been very much struck with the new theory, which has been brought forward lately, that the native, having very few wants, and being able to live comfortably without much work, is apt to get into mischief, and that it is an actual kindness to tax him and in other ways put pressure upon him in order to teach him the dignity of labour. Now South Africa and Central Africa are not the only parts of the world in which there are people who do not work. In this country there are many such. So long as they do not commit any crime they are entitled to live in ease and comfort on their private means, and I have never heard any proposal to compel them to work. The Chancellor of the Exchequer has during the last few years been driven to great stress for additional sources of taxation, but he has not adopted this course. As regards the natives brought to work in the South African mines, we want to know whether they come of their own free will or under compulsion; whether, before being engaged, they understand the nature of the work they will have to do and the wages they will earn."

MR. THOMAS BAYLEY, M.P., having seconded the vote of thanks, which was carried unanimously, it was briefly acknowledged by Sir John Gorst.

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**END OF
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